

National Catholic Theater Conference

VOL. 3.

MID-SUMMER 1944

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MIDSUMMER WELCOME

The Conference bids a cordial, though it must be brief, welcome to those new members from Texas to Canada, who have joined our ranks since May.

Lack of space in our extra, midsummer issue has abridged other items too. If what remains gives you an inkling of the abounding interest in better theater, we must be content.

WITH THE PUBLISHERS

Congratulations on your pre-season planning. Latest releases from the publishers may suggest new titles:

Career Angel, the comedy with the pre-Broadway Blackfriar past is being revised by Father Murray for Dramatists Play Svc. Acting edition, 75¢, available about Sept. 15. See Jan. 1944 Calendar for review: October 1944 for evaluation.

Tomorrow the World, now released in Ky., Ill., Mo., Wisc., Iowa, Minn., Mont., except within radius of 25 mi. of Chicago, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. By fall, wider release is expected says Dramatic Pub. Co., Chicago. Communicate with publishers for royalty before ordering play copies, reporting size of town, school and auditorium, number of performances, and income from last production.

Skin of Our Teeth: Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize Winner will be available practically everywhere by fall. Samuel French.

But Not Goodbye by George Seaton released except for few areas; copies Aug. 15. Samuel French.

Only the Heart by Horton Foote ready Aug. 20; Dramatists Play Service.

Only an Orphan Girl, new version of old style melodrama. Aug. 1; Dramatists

Not expected this season: Over Twenty One, Angel Street, Life with Father.

Doubtful: Mrs. January and Mr. X.

CHILDREN'S STAGE

Detroit's Children's Theatre has gone ahead faster than Bing Crosby's delinquent choir. (Haven't you enjoyed "Going My Way"!) Perhaps it is because Detroit has a bigger group - 250 members a year after its opening, or has more instructors - one for each age group. At any rate audience demand runs high: ten performances for Peck's Bad Boy", and 300 turned away after four sold-out performances of "Anne of Green Gables."

Divided into four groups the total membership is kept active: teen-agers Friday evening 7-9; 10-12 year olds in beginners' and advanced sections and 6-9 year olds on Saturday afternoon from 2:30 - 4:30. First hour is spent in class instruction; second, in rehearsal of one-act plays.

Children have their own officers and organization including administrative committees (Play Reading, House, etc.). Most recent activity is play writing contest.

The ABC of their objectives are so close to reality it's a pleasure to review them:

A - A natural outlet for the talents and energies of children.

B - An opportunity for other children of Detroit to see real plays suited to their years at a price reasonable enough for several children in a family (25¢ is admission charge).

C - A training ground for future members of the adult theatre, meanwhile providing a reservoir of young talent for possible need in adult productions.

THE CAMEO PLAYERS

Sister Mary Angelita, B.V.M., responded to our call for a resume of Cameo Players' season with an artistically bound scrap book of the year's activities - 21 items in all, ranging from War Bond programs and class skits to the Senior Class Play, "First Dance", and collaboration with St. Ambrose Academy Players in "The Gondoliers."

In the competitive drama contest open to Senior Cameo Players Betty Jane La Beau won the Churchill Drama Award.

Immaculate Conception Academy provides varied and stimulating dramatic fare.

OVER THE AIR

Have you been listening to The Hour of Faith Sunday mornings at 11:30 on the Blue Network? Former Conference officers took over in June for a series of informal talks. Rev. Urban Nagle, O.P., has been succeeded by Rev. Thomas F. Carey, O.P. who is currently broadcasting. Rev. Brendan Larnen, O.P., former Secretary of the Conference and now moderator of IFCA motion picture reviewing board, will follow Father Carey.

Father Donohue has once more registered his radio group, The Voice of Loras, for membership. Less directly the radio divisions of our larger producing units also hold membership in the Conference and through the season have regularly written and produced weekly or special event programs....Pittsburgh, Dayton, Richmond, to name a few. Detroit's original dramatic presentations have been so successful the 13-week invitation issued them last September has been extended indefinitely.

San Diego's fifth NCCS clubhouse opened with a fanfare - and an audience of 10,000 representing church, state, and armed forces. Core of the entertainment was half-hour radio broadcast "At Your Service" written by Courtenay Savage and played by Pedro de Cordoba, Jane Wyatt, Eddie Ryan, and Una O'Connor. Blue Network re-broadcast later that evening.

A shelf is set aside in our library for radio scripts. If you have material which can be made available to others, we shall cherish copies. Be sure to let us know whether production entails royalty and on what station(s) the script has been produced.

MURDER IN A NUNNERY

Some of our best pleased correspondents this past season are those who produced "Murder in a Nunnery." Their enthusiastic response has been rich reward for our efforts to make copies available for spring production. We, in turn, are grateful to Emmet Lavery not only for his adaptation, which has proved its audience appeal in all sections, but also for making it available. Without his assistance the script undoubtedly would still be awaiting Broadway production or publication despite our prodding.

Since its release "Murder in a Nunnery" has accumulated a lengthy list of references, all speaking highly of the comedy-mystery's construction and entertainment value: Sister Mary Peter, O.P., Dean of Rosary and former head of Rosary's Drama Department; Sister Mary Hildegarde, R.S.M. reflecting the enthusiasm of Our Lady of Cincinnati College's Edgecliff Players; Mother Marie Therese Charles, O.S.U., and the student directors for the Thalpomenians' production at Ursuline Brescia College, New Orleans.

A complete report of the production at Academy of Holy Angels, Minneapolis, comes from Sister Charitas, (who this summer is teaching Speech at College of St. Catherine), supplemented by pictures of several scenes. "It was pronounced the best play ever given here at the Academy. Personally I will say it was the most interesting one to stage because I could discover some new point to develop at every turn." A high school director who can watch dress rehearsals and final performance out front, leaving the 13 scene changes to sophomores and juniors backstage, knows her job well.

Sister Mary Hildegarde, R.S.M., equally enthusiastic, has also donated pictures for your reference.

SHAKESPEARE - PENNSYLVANIA

Cue and Curtain Players at Immaculata College chose "Twelfth Night" for their Senior Play on May 10. Immaculata has already seen "The Merchant of Venice" (1928), "Love's Labor Lost" (1938), and "Taming of the Shrew" (1943).

Under the accelerated program at Immaculata Sister Donatus directs two Senior plays a year.

AROUND THE LOOP

"The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint Exupery was adapted by Mary McEniry for Rosary College Drama Department April production. Special permission was secured for this performance, but publication is anticipated.

Therese Marie Cuny made a special arrangement of "The Ballad of Bataan" for Loretto High School's verse speaking choir, and also in May directed "The Visions of Fatima" at Loretto Academy, Woodlawn, in a special performance for the IFCA. "The Visions of Fatima" is a play written by Mother Eduorda of the Ladies of Loretto.

Mundelein College Mosaics have been an annual spring event since the opening of the college. This year "They Also Serve", a patriotic chorale drama, was highlighted. Verse Choir and Dance were directed by Catherine Danny Phelps, faculty member of the Drama Department; the unit set with its scene changes effected by Linnebach projections was planned by Junior Art Major Ruth Shmigelsky. The Laetare Players of Mundelein presented their Golden Rose award for superior ability and outstanding service to Senior Drama Major Lorraine Knaub.

DATELINE: HOLLYWOOD, JUNE

Emmet Lavery, long identified with RKO, has signed a year's contract with Walter Wanger at Universal and is now preparing a technicolor film dealing with the adventures of Aesop and Croesus. The time is 580 BC; the place (s), Athens and Olympus.

Meanwhile Mr. Lavery will be represented on Broadway next season by "The Magnificent Yankee", a new play with the life of Justice Holmes for its theme. Arthur Hopkins will produce it, and Walter Huston is mentioned as Chief Justice.

SOUTHWEST REGION

Latest Regional Chairman appointee is Mrs. Bujarski of Wichita, Kansas. Long a leader in diocesan theatre activities, Mrs. Bujarski is well equipped to advance Conference interest in her area.

If you have a copy of "The Alabaster Box", publisher, Sheed & Ward, may we borrow it?

GET-TOGETHERS

Conference members are getting together these days and exchanging viewpoints in person. We think it's the most hopeful omen of the season.

Dayton Blackfriars' journeyed to Cincinnati for Edgecliff Players' production of "Murder in a Nunnery", and the Players plan to return the visit when the Blackfriars' schedule their performance. July issue of "Friarcrackers" promises an early date.

CITATIONS

Three representatives of Conference groups are studying theater seriously at Catholic University's summer school -- Mother Mary Agatha Hicks, O.S.U., with a view to next season's productions by the Thalpomenians of Ursuline Brescia College, New Orleans, which she will direct.

Two are winners of scholarships offered for talent and outstanding contribution to their groups. Winner of Catholic Theatre Guild of Richmond's award is Lillian Santucci; Gertrude MacEachern has earned the title of the "most promising actor" of Catholic Theatre of Detroit. Gertrude has "four years of splendid cooperation" to her credit on Detroit's ledger.

Detroit's award to the most promising technician went to Mercedes Thibault, a fashion artist who has supplemented her stage and poster designs with actual construction work. Miss Thibault unable to accept, the prize money goes to Mercedes Lauer, first alternate, who has chosen to spend it at Seattle's University of Washington. Other annual prizes of dramatic libraries announced by Detroit are: Jane Hengesbaugh - directorial job on "Willow and I"; Sydney Bloom - best technical job (she was winner last year of "most promising technician's scholarship"); for meritorious contribution to CTD in her role of publicity chief, Lenore Marshall; and for her organization and operation of the Childrens Stage, Margaret Passmore is titled "outstanding contributor."

Scholarship awards are insurance for your group. If your balance sheet can't pay the premium, follow Richmond's example and build up more cooperation by running benefit program for scholarship fund.

PILATE'S DAUGHTER

Father Scannell's Mission Church Players echo the report of other Conference groups in their "most successful season". Including matinees, forty performances in a theater of 1200 capacity brought "Pilate's Daughter" to some 37,000 New Englanders.

Its author, Rev. Francis Kenzel, CSSR, scribbled the first draft of his Passion Play on a train trip to Boston in 1902. His parish dramatic group wanted a Lenten play. Father Kenzel thought he was writing for one or two performances, but audiences have been coming back each Lent for forty-two years.

Before Passion Play rehearsals begin, the Players test their skill in other plays and study under visiting drama lecturers.

PROGRAM NOTES

The variety of your programs, those hospitable gestures introducing your play and performers to your audience, provides a complete range from homo-mimeographed single folds through more elaborate printing and stationery jobs. Whatever the individual choice, the more active groups adhere to one formula. There is a continuity to the Academy of Holy Angels' mimeographed series with its rainbow of colors for the season, as there is to Detroit's "The Catholic Theatregoer" with its striking black and white covers, boasting a photograph from the current production. The College of St. Elizabeth prefers the dignity of a heavy deckle edged cover in pastel shade. And how we regret the absence of Fordham's ingenious and artistic programs.

LIBRARY REMINDER

The library is in perpetual motion these days; it's proving itself, and we love it. Your cooperation will make it possible for us to continue on the present basis.

Remember: Due date is stamped on inside back cover. Give others a chance to read the play by returning it promptly.
Remember: Stamps to cover our postage to you must be returned with play copies. If you are looking for more constructive work from the Conference, don't make us spend our time writing bills for 3¢ or 30¢.

CANADA'S CONTEST

The Cathespian Guild of Montreal has announced its 1944-45 One-Act Play Writing Contest will close October 15.

This is the group that sponsors the Montreal Catholic Drama Festival, adjudicated this past April by Father Naglo.

MORE, LATER

Catholic University's musical closing their season, "Sing out Sweet Land", has the critics Singing, Variety's verdict that CU "could be proud" of it, proved meager praise. Brandt and Brandt, outstanding theatrical agents, went to work, immediately, and the Theatre Guild is now planning a fall production that calls for the original leading man. Walter Kerr is the author.

FATHER TRIVETT

On June 25, Rev. W. K. Trivett, S. J., celebrated his First Mass at Amsterdam, N. Y. While stationed at Fordham University in 1939 and 1940 Father Trivett was of great assistance to the N.Y. State Division of the Conference, and his tireless efforts made possible the national convention at Fordham in 1941. At this time particularly we are thinking of him and praying for the success of all his efforts.

LAUGH-HUNGRY?

Sister Mary Aloysius, Director of Clarke College Players, heartily recommend "Seven Sisters", the Edith Ellis comedy for these laugh-hungry times. At Dubuque the farce-comedy centering on the Hungarian mother's attempts to marry off her seven daughters was a hit with a capacity audience. Loras College supplied the necessary grooms. (Isn't Clarke lucky!)

CORRECTION PLEASE

Our first, and we hope our only correction on the publicity folder: the Production Calendar is published the first of each month from October through May. There is no September issue.

This year, as last, we shall hold to our deadline - the 25th of each month. October's bulletin will go to the mimeographer September 25th....but don't wait

